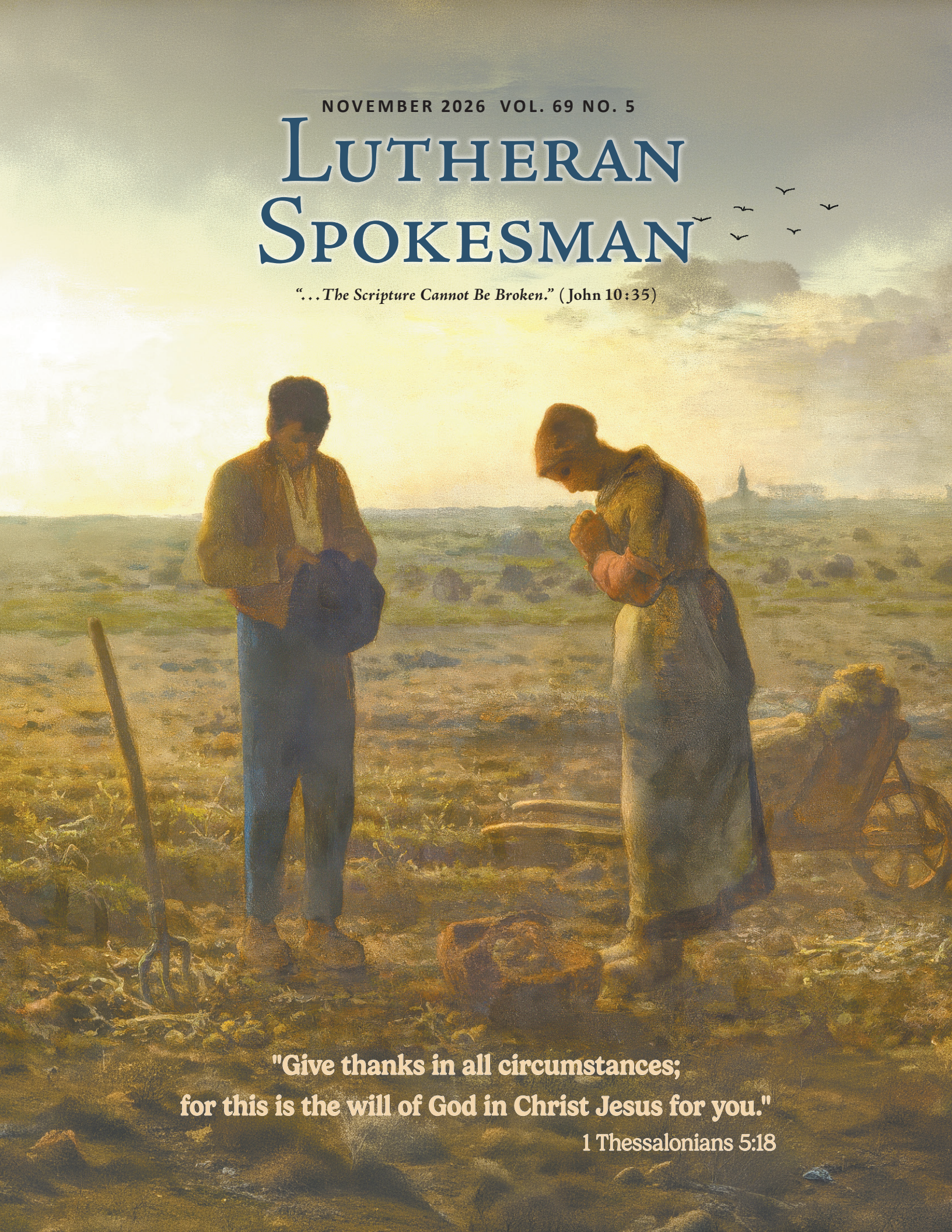
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Lutheran Spokesman

"...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken." (John 10:35)



"Give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
1 Thessalonians 5:18



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Yes, in All Circumstances

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)

"In all circumstances"? Really? What if I have incurable cancer or some other dread disease? Should I be thankful for that? What if I suffer the sudden, unexpected loss of one who is near and dear to me? Should I give thanks? What if war comes to our homeland? What if violence floods my community? What if a tornado or hurricane or wildfire destroys my house? What if the stock market crashes and I lose all my investments? *"In all circumstances"?* Really?



Yes, really. We Christians need to sit down and quietly meditate. The fall into sin had terrible consequences. It brought death into a living, vibrant world. Death penetrated everything from the largest galaxy to subatomic quarks.

The ultimate result of this death is eternal separation from God. However, before that happens, death manifests itself in all the destructive events on or above earth. This includes the catastrophic events in our own lives. All of these things foretell that ultimate result of sin.

Consider this: *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."* (James 1:17) By rejecting the Source, mankind rejected the good and perfect gifts. Instead, our ongoing sinfulness has become the source of sad and debilitating plagues, both spiritual and physical. Therefore, as we meditate, we can only come to the conclusion that we are the cause of our deathly life or, as Paul calls it, *"this body of death."* (Romans 7:24)

This being the case, why are we still receiving good and perfect gifts? It can be summed up in the word *grace*. Moments after the fall into sin and death, the love of God revealed the reversal of what Satan and man had done. He promised a Savior, who would bring *"life and immortality to light through the gospel."* (2 Timothy 1:10)

Dear readers, we sinners have received the following promise of the Savior: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."* (John 5:24)

From the bondage that oppressed us,
From sin's fetters that possessed us,
From the grief that sore distressed us,
We, the captives, now are free. (TLH 90:6)

Even in the midst of the deep darkness, we can say, "Thanks to God, the sins that make this a body of death have been washed away for all eternity." In the midst of the greatest turmoil, we can say, "Thanks to God all things now work together for my good." When the plagues of this life arise, we can say, "These are not plagues for me, but only reminders, reminders of that from which I have been delivered." When in the valley of the shadow of death, we can say, "I am sure that death will not be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus my Lord. For I know that if my earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, I have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Verily, verily, we can give thanks in *all* circumstances, because death has been overcome. The body still experiences the consequences of sin; it is still a body of death, but our spirits are filled with the everlasting life of Christ. And, one day our bodies will be transformed into bodies of life, fit for heaven.

See how God, for us providing,
Gave His Son and life abiding;
He our weary steps is guiding
From earth's woe to heavenly joy. (TLH 90:3)



John Pfeiffer is retired from the pastoral and teaching ministry. He is a former president of Immanuel Lutheran College.

He's Coming to Get You!

Does the thought "He's coming to get me!" create fear, or joy? In a bad dream, the thought implies fear, danger, harm! On the other hand, while waiting for a ride at the airport, or after practice, or in a car that quit, it's a thought of comfort, joy, relief.



The Day of Judgment

Both of those thoughts apply to Judgment Day. Christ is coming! This can invoke either fear and dread—*"Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."* (Luke 23:30 KJV), or joy and relief—*"Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."* (Luke 21:28 KJV) The ones who despise the Savior, even unto death, will face the music—*"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."* (Matthew 25:41 KJV) Those who trust the Lord's mercy in Christ even unto death will hear, *"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matthew 25:34 KJV) For one group it's a day of regret, anger, and shaking the fist at God. For the other, joy, peace, and extending arms to the Lord, receiving the ultimate "Get-out-of-Jail-Free" card—freed from sin's physical grave and spiritual grave.

Do be aware, there will be no "silver lining" for those that fail, no second chance, no short-cut, no jury-rigging an alternate way. His verdict will stand. He has come to "get" you.

It is not difficult to accept the fact that there will be a Day of Judgment. Even an unbeliever may have a vague sense of impending judgment. The part that is difficult to swallow is the *reason* for the condemnation—lack of perfection! Our holy, wise, and almighty Creator demands perfection from each, inside and out. The proud human heart reacts, "Hey! No one can do that! What do you expect? It's not fair! It's Your fault, God, that I don't measure up. You expect the impossible! You are unreasonable!" How can anyone meet God's spiritual demands? No self-centeredness, no jealousy, no get-even's, no harsh words, no lust for things off-limits, no sin. Ever. Yet, *"Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* (James 2:10 KJV) *"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* (Galatians 3:10 KJV) Judgment Day is coming. God will not be apologetic and say, "I hate to do this, but . . ." God is true and right. God will get you!

We need help. Together with sinking Peter we say, *"Lord, save me!"* (Matthew 14:30 KJV) And the Lord provides help, big Help! He sent His eternal Son to deliver, help, rescue, save—each and all—from the devil and his successful schemes against you, from your own foolish buying into the devil's lies, from every sin—bold sins, careless sins, even "but-I-meant-well" sins. In love for you, the Son paid the price for your pardon and freedom. He has redeemed you from the physical grave, and from hell's total separation from God. Jesus has died and risen for you! He is coming to take you home, to safety, peace, joy forever. *"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord!"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 KJV)

Rejoice! He's coming to get you. Bask in the love of Judgment Day!



Richard Kanzenbach recently retired from the pastorate of Saint Luke's Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.

HEARTS IN HARMONY—

PROFILES OF THE HYMNWRITERS WHO SHAPE OUR WORSHIP

Each month we highlight a hymnwriter who authored one or more of the well-loved hymns that we sing today.

Benjamin Schmolck

"My Jesus, As Thou Wilt"

TLH 1, 300, 420, 571

The son of a Lutheran pastor, Schmolk was born at Brauchitschdorf, Silesia (now Poland), studied theology at the University of Leipzig, and graduated in 1697. His entire ministry was served in Schweidnitz in Silesia, laboring under very harsh legal/political conditions which made things burdensome for Lutherans.



Benjamin Schmolck 1672-1737

The Peace of Augsburg (1555) had previously established the region as exclusively Roman Catholic, but the Peace of Westphalia (1648) permitted the existence of Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinistic churches throughout the entire Holy Roman Empire. In Silesia, however, severe restrictions were placed on non-Catholic churches. Only three Lutheran churches—known as the *Friedenskirchen* (Churches of Peace)—were permitted, and heavy-handed conditions intended to suppress Lutheran worship were enforced. Lutheran churches could not be built within the city walls; had to be constructed with the perishable materials of wood, straw, and clay without any stone or brick; could not have steeples or church bells; and had to be built within a single year (which of course limited their size).

Schmolck's church at Schweidnitz usually had three pastors, but those three had to minister to members scattered among thirty-six separate villages in the region. All that, of course, had to be done without the transportation or communication technology we tend to take for granted today. Schmolck was extremely conscientious in executing the duties of his call, and his grueling labors over a period of years probably led to a decline in health. He had a stroke in 1730 which left him partially paralyzed, and suffered two more strokes before his death in 1737.

Throughout all this, Schmolck wrote over nine hundred hymns (as well as devotional books, cantatas, and musical compositions for weddings and funerals), but by far his best-known hymn is "My Jesus, as Thou Wilt" (TLH 420). It is, in effect, a petition for trust in God's will regardless of our circumstances, and for a proper understanding of that will. Petitions of that sort can be prayed unconditionally, because we know on the basis of God's Word that it is what He desires. Not all our petitions, however, are of that nature; and certainly, the conditions under which Schmolck labored might very well lead to petitions for relief from daily difficulties.

When we think of prayer—specifically with regard to petitions—it's important to remember that a petition is a request, not a command. We know that God responds to the petitions of His people according to His good and gracious will, His wisdom, His love for us in Christ, and His perfect knowledge of what is best. That is our confidence, based on His infallible Word. That is why we often need to add to our own petitions the words (or at least the thought) of Christ on the Mount of Olives, *"nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."* (Luke 22:42 KJV) That truth is echoed in "My Jesus, as Thou Wilt."

The first line of verse 1 is "My Jesus, as Thou wilt; Oh, may Thy will be mine!" There is a difference, though, between praying, "My Jesus, as Thou wilt," and praying "Oh, may Thy will be mine." It's very easy to miss that distinction. Both petitions are God-pleasing, and they are similar; but they are not the same.

Those are actually two closely related but different prayers. The first expresses our acceptance of and submission to God's will even when it is different from what we ask. It's parallel to *"nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."* The second, however, is not a petition for *acceptance*, but rather for *conformity*. It asks that our own desires be *identical* to what God wills. It prays for a greater thing: that our will be *conformed* to (the same as) His, not just *submissive* to it.

May we ever seek that God would conform our will to His, even as we submit to His when it differs from ours. Amen.



Craig Owings is a retired teacher and serves as assistant editor of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. He lives in Cape Coral, Florida.

What's Old is New

"Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." **(1 John 2:7-11)**

Have you listened to music today? If so, chances are you streamed it through your phone or other electronic device. There was a time, however, when vinyl LP records played at 33 1/3 rpm were by far the most popular mode of listening. But as technology advanced, records faded into obscurity. Yet now audiophiles might tell you or your grandparents to dig out that box of old records in the closet or corner of the basement. Play and appreciate records again, because, experts say, they have a broader frequency range, warmth, and depth than digital recordings. In other words, what's old is new!



The same could be said about God's commandments. Unquestionably, they are old, dating back to Mt. Sinai when God wrote them on two tablets of stone. They are summed up with one all-inclusive word: *Love*. Have you listened to them lately? One by one they command a perfect, holy love for God and one's neighbor. Do you enjoy hearing them, or would you rather just shove them into a dark corner and try to forget them. After all, they point an accusing finger at each of us. If we loved God perfectly, we wouldn't let all kinds of earthly concerns take priority over hearing His Word. If we loved others as ourselves, jealousy and hatred wouldn't ruin relationships.

But the apostle John says, "Look again. What's old is new!" The commandments don't change in their divine origin, but what is wonderfully new is their fulfillment in Christ. The One Who is Love shined His light into the darkness of our sinful world. He loved His heavenly Father with a holy love. He loved sinners with a love so perfect that He laid down His life for His enemies. *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."* (Romans 10:4)

Mere hours before His crucifixion, Jesus told the disciples, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."* (John 13:34-35) Jesus' light pierces the darkness. The day brightens. The kingdom advances, and the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to a new perspective on the commandments. We don't have to dread their demands as being hopelessly beyond our grasp. Jesus clothes us with His perfect righteousness. He loved perfectly for us. His death paid our debt. What's old is new. Living in the light, we show our love for the Savior in loving those around us. In Christ what's old is new. What before only terrified is now music to our ears!



Michael Eichstadt is a retired pastor and former president of the CLC. He lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Giving Thanks First

Growing up, there was a family debate as to whether one should give thanks before the meal or after the meal. It certainly makes sense to say "thank you" to the Lord after having received food for our bodies. Yet, an argument can be made for thanking the Lord in anticipation of the good things you are about to receive.



In 2 Chronicles 20, godly King Jehoshaphat had received terrifying news. Three enemy nations had allied their armies to attack the people of Judah. Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah and sought the will of the Lord in prayer. In his prayer, Jehoshaphat quoted to the Lord the promises of protection He had made.

Then, in a scene that is emotional to imagine, all the people of Judah, from toddlers to the elderly, stood before the Lord seeking His protection. The Prophet Jahaziel brought them the Word of the Lord and told them that they did not need to be afraid of this great army, *"for the battle is not yours, but God's . . . . You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the Lord on your behalf."* (2 Chronicles 20:15-17) Having heard God's Word, the King, all the people, and the priests began a worship service, praising the Lord *"with a very loud voice."* (verse 19)

Early the next morning, Jehoshaphat led the army of Judah to meet the enemy. As they did, the King reminded the people to believe in the Lord and His Word. He then appointed men to go before the army and sing praises to the Lord. And what did the army sing as they headed into battle? *"Give thanks to the Lord, for His steadfast love endures forever."* (verse 21) They gave thanks first! The Lord, true to His Word, caused confusion among the enemy and they destroyed one another. Judah watched as God won the victory for them.

Each of us is confronted with news that makes us fearful and afraid. When this happens, learn from King Jehoshaphat to bow to the Lord in prayer, bringing your problems and fears to Him. As you do, remember His Word and promises, and maybe even remind the Lord of His promises. Remind Him that He promised to always be with you and never forsake you. Remind Him how He has promised to make all things work together for good.

But above all, remember all the promises that flow from the cross of Christ and empty tomb of Easter. As threats fill your heart with fear, know that the cross and empty tomb are proof that God has already won the greatest victory for you. He has canceled your debt of sin. He has overcome death and given you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now not even the gates of hell can prevail against you.

And then, mindful of His victory over that evil alliance of sin, death, and hell, mindful of all His promises to you, give thanks. Give thanks before the test results come back. Give thanks before you open that bill. Give thanks before your meeting with your boss. Give thanks as you see death approaching. Give thanks that God has already fought your battles and won, and will be with you as you face this new threat. Like Jehoshaphat and Judah, through faith in the promises of God, you too can give thanks first.



Nathan Pfeiffer is pastor of Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

In this series we offer brief introductions to the books of the Bible, including background, authorship, content, and application to the lives of today's Christians.

The Gospel of Mark

The Lively Evangelist

Mark's Gospel is remarkable for many reasons. We begin at the end: modern translations note that the last twelve verses (16:9-20) may not be part of Mark's Gospel, since they are missing in two Greek copies from the fourth century. Yet, they are found in most copies, and in early translations of Mark's Gospel into Latin, Syriac, and Coptic languages. Already in the second century, the church father Irenaeus quoted from these verses, and the early Church received them as Mark's words, as agreeing with the other Gospels, and without error.

The Greek word *immediately* is used ten times in the other Gospels and Acts; but Mark uses it *forty-one* times to quickly carry the reader from one lively scene to the next!

Mark's name does not appear in his book, yet we can be sure he authored it. His Gospel may have been written as early as A.D. 45-55 to Gentiles in Rome. If so, it may predate Matthew's Gospel.

At a young age, Mark may have been converted by the witness of Peter, who refers to him as his spiritual *"son."* (1 Peter 5:13) Papias and other church fathers state that Mark recorded Peter's testimony concerning Jesus.

Mark is associated with both Peter and Paul. When Peter was miraculously freed from prison, *"he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark."* (Acts 12:12) Mark was with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey, but left them in Perga and went home to Jerusalem. (Acts 13: 5,13) Paul would not bring him on the second journey; but Barnabas (Mark's "cousin" – Colossians 4:10) strongly disagreed! So, Paul chose Silas, and *"Barnabas took Mark with him"* to Cyprus. (Acts 15:36-40)

Mark had failed in Paul's eyes; but God was working *"all things together for good"* in the case of this young man who had been *"called according to His purpose."* (Romans 8:28) As God also purposed, Mark wrote his Gospel after returning to Jerusalem. Paul was surely aware of it by A.D. 61, when under arrest in Rome he wrote to the Colossians (4:10): *"Mark . . . sends you his greetings."* Mark was with Paul again! During his second imprisonment, Paul wrote to Timothy, *"Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry."* (2 Timothy 4:11)

Was Mark the unnamed youth of 14:51-52, who had followed Jesus until he himself felt an immediate need to save himself from the mob? Probably. By one count, the short form of the Greek word *immediately* is used ten times in the other Gospels and Acts; but Mark uses it forty-one times to quickly carry the reader from one lively scene to the next! He writes with a sense of immediate urgency, not to save himself but to reveal Jesus as *"the Christ"* (Messiah) to Greek-speaking Gentiles in Rome.

Already in the first verse of his Gospel, Mark confesses boldly: *"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* The last verse speaks of the continuing power of God's Son and the spread of His message to the world: *"And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs."* (16:20) In between, Mark records far more miracles than any of the longer Gospels. He focuses on Jesus' works of power, His life, His death, and His resurrection, in order to identify Him as the promised Christ, the Son of God from eternity, God's holy Servant, and man's only Savior.

Mark knew there was no time to waste, as Jesus said, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel!"* (1:15) Jesus' words are still true! Read Mark's Gospel. Encourage others to do so, too!



Vance Fossum is a retired pastor. He lives in West Columbia, South Carolina.



Pastor Gilbert A Sydow
1914-1988

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor Emeritus James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Rev. Gilbert A. Sydow (1914-1988) was involved in the organization of the CLC. He served pastorates in Ellensburg and Lynnwood, Washington; and New Ulm, Minnesota. He also served on the CLC Boards of Doctrine and Regents. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman *of August 1988. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.*

"Neither Do the Hogs!"

Luther tells us something special about a Christian when he says in his explanation to the Fourth Petition that we are "to receive with thanksgiving our daily bread." This sets us apart from "the wicked," the unbelieving who also receive daily bread from a gracious God but do so without acknowledgment or gratitude. A story is told of a small boy who noticed that at his friend's home there was prayer at mealtime, and remarked, "We don't pray at our house." His friend answered, "Neither do the hogs at our house." It was a distinguishing feature of man at creation that He was made with the ability to understand his relationship to and dependence upon God and could express it in worship. This set him above the beast. And in the "saving of that which was lost" it remains a distinctive mark of the child of God. *"The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:6) sets us straight also on this.

This none of us question. But there is much about us that can weaken and destroy what this means. The insidious influence of those devilish "isms" which surround us—materialism, naturalism, evolutionism—tends to make a prayerful attitude of thanksgiving something less than the "Christian's vital breath." A haphazard, chancy, falling together of things in nature leaves no place for a creating and providential God. That is why there can be no thanksgiving where evolutionary philosophy rules and is accepted, and why a "Thanksgiving Day" is meaningless, really an impossibility, to so much of our nation. The Christian always has to remind himself and meditate continually on the depth of the providential care of God—how all-inclusive and encompassing it is. The Psalmist understood. He brought it down to his daily living when he said, *"Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."* (Psalm 127:1)

But having come even to this full realization does not take care of all that might profane our thanksgiving. Repeatedly our Lord tells us that under His providential care we are to take *"no thought for the morrow,"* (Matthew 6:34) not to worry, and we are to *"be content with such things as ye have."* (Hebrews 13:5) Are we aware that there is much pressure on us to do just the opposite? An advertising man once said that the purpose of his work was "to make people dissatisfied with what they have." Who wouldn't grant that the clever and colorful advertising with which we are bombarded tends to do just that?

We cannot make ungodly the effort to improve our material situation in life, but we do have to take care lest these efforts are accompanied with sneaking bits of worry and discontent, and our "Now thank we all our God" is marred with fretting and dissatisfaction. But then it is asked, "Who, even among Christians, is completely free of this?" Indeed, no one! But that, of course, does not change what the Lord expects. Here again we see "how frail" we are and our crying need of the forgiveness of sin. Then prayer is pressed upon us, *"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."* (Mark 9:24) Make my thanksgiving pure!

Spiritual Warfare

Not too long ago I was returning to Africa and someone I met in the airport asked me what the most striking example of spiritual warfare that I had encountered was. He was disappointed that I couldn't tell him about an exorcism or overt display of the devil's power. Perhaps I have led a sheltered life here in Togo and in India.



Voodoo paraphernalia at the Lome fetish market (*photo credit Alexander Sarlay)*

It would be wrong to deny that such things happen, but Satan is often much more subtle. Paul says that we *"take every thought captive to obey Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:5), which shows that one of the devil's main areas of attack is our thoughts.

A non-Biblical idea prevalent in West Africa is the "generational curse." For example, if a woman has trouble conceiving, it is because her grandmother had an abortion. "Men of God" here twist Scripture to support this idea and claim they can break these curses (or teach you how to do it), often for a "small" fee.

Last year I taught a Bible study series on angels and demons because it seemed that many here were giving the devil too much power. To be honest, I felt unqualified; maybe there is more to spiritual warfare here than I have seen. After all, I'm just a foreign white man; what do I know of their day-to-day realities?



Skulls at the Lome fetish market (*photo credit Alexander Sarlay)*

This shows another of Satan's lies: Christianity is a white man's religion and is for Europeans, not Africans! Just the other day the head pastor here, Pastor Blewu, forwarded a video to me in which a man is calling for Africans to reject Christianity because it is the religion of the colonizers. He claims that Africans won't be truly independent unless they throw off the European religion and embrace their traditional religions. In Bible class I have frequently pointed out that Jesus was not born in Europe. As a baby He was taken to



John's Church

Egypt, which is in Africa! One of the early converts was the Ethiopian eunuch (probably not the same as the present-day country, but it was still in Africa). We are currently studying Revelation, where John sees believers *"from every tribe and language and people and nation"* (Revelation 5:9), and we are told that the Gospel is for everyone (Revelation 14:6).

The main traditional religion here is voodoo. Its birthplace is Benin, the country just east of Togo. Many voodoo practitioners from Haiti and the U.S. come to Benin to study. And Lomé, Togo (where I live), is home to the Akodessawa Fetish (an object with supposed magical powers) Market, the "largest voodoo market in the world," selling monkey heads, other dead animals, and voodoo dolls. Some say it is merely a tourist trap, but we should not underestimate the influence of voodoo on the hearts and minds of people (Ephesians 6:12).

Just around the corner from my apartment is the residence of the president of the local office of the "National Federation of Voodoo Worship and the Traditions of Togo." Above the voodoo hall next door is painted the words "The Blood of our Father Agbodjissa Protects Us." Voodoo is ancestor and spirit worship (like Japanese Shintō), looking to the spirits of the deceased for protection and power.

John, one of our pastors here in Togo, is even a former voodoo priest! Pastor Blewu told me that one time after meeting with John and his fellow voodoo practitioners, John called him shortly after he arrived home to ask if he had made it home OK. He said that he had and asked why. John told him that his colleagues had been trying to curse him ever since he left, and he was worried that something might have happened to him on the way home. In *AFRAID: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare in America*, Pastor Robert H. Bennett reports that voodoo priests in Haiti "All . . . agreed that curses can only be placed upon nonfaithful Christians and unbelievers. [They] were very clear that they don't even attempt to curse Christians, because they recognize that the God Who protects us is greater than any of their gods" (page 144).

Through the Word of God, John came to trust in his Lord and Savior Jesus and went on to study to become one of our pastors. Pastor Blewu just told me that two of the sons of that voodoo chapter president near me have left the family and become pastors also (with other church bodies).

A sinner repenting and turning to Jesus is the greatest demonstration of God's power over the devil that I can imagine. I told that to the man in the airport and he was rather disappointed by my answer, but it is true! And every time you walk into church to hear God's Word or open your Bible to read it, you are engaging in spiritual warfare and overcoming the evil one. May God continue to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus through His powerful Word! Amen.



Peter Evensen is a full-time foreign missionary for the CLC.

Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church
Cheyenne, Wyoming



The first stanza of hymn 123 (TLH) beautifully confesses two truths about our relationship with the Lord. "Our God, our Help in ages past, Our Hope for years to come, Our Shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal Home!" In the past, God has been our help, our shelter from the stormy blasts of this world. In the future, God is our hope. Our eternal and heavenly home is sure because the Lord God has made it ours through the saving work of His Son. Both things are true. He has helped us. He will continue to help us.

Here at Redeemer Lutheran, we thank and praise the Lord for His manifold blessings that He has given to us throughout many generations. Eight years after its founding in 1952, Redeemer became a charter member of the then newly-formed Church of the Lutheran Confession. This upcoming summer will be our seventy-fifth year as a church, and an anniversary celebration is currently being planned. There have been many variables within our congregation throughout these seventy-five years. But there has always been and will ever remain one constant. Our Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, remains faithful to us. *"For I am the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob."* (Malachi 3:6 NKJV)



Sanctuary, Christmas 2025

In recent years, our merciful God has been quite gracious to us. After forty-five years, our Christian day school was closed in 2008 due to lack of students. In 2022, after years of planning and blessings from the Lord, we were able to reopen our Christian day school doors. Our church called Mrs. Dawn Mayhew from within our congregation to be our teacher. Mrs. Mayhew served us faithfully for four years, restarting



Teacher Orrin Hanel (l.) with Pastor Libby and the school children



Children of the congregation with the ILC Tour Choir

and maintaining the school. This past year, through the work of the call committee and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we called Mr. Orrin Hanel to continue the good work of training our children in the way they should go. This year we have seven students. Looking ahead, Lord willing, we project enrollment to grow to nine or more students in the coming years as younger members of the congregation reach school age.

Church membership has also grown, extending to fifty-five souls with an average attendance of thirty-six for worship. We are getting to the point where we are discussing a possible expansion project, as both our church and school could use more space for worship and teaching. These talks are in the earliest stages, but as we have seen in recent years through the reopening of our school, the Lord is with us and will continue to provide for us according to His good will. *"Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?"* (Jeremiah 32:27 NKJV)

The story of Redeemer Lutheran Church has not been one of uninterrupted growth or earthly success. There have been seasons of difficulty. Yet Christ has preserved His people and His Word here for seventy-five years. We continue to have our midweek Bible classes, as well as Sunday morning Bible class and Sunday school. We continue to maintain the building and property. We continue to be able to have yearly joint Reformation and Mission festival worship services with Prince of Peace in Loveland, Colorado and St. Paul's of Lakewood, Colorado. Our ladies' group, Ladies of Our Redeemer, continues to serve the congregation by providing essential help in many ways. We continue to preach the Word, in and out of season.

And the Lord has seen fit to bless us in many new ways in recent years. We live-stream our worship service and put out our sermons weekly in podcast form by the effort of dedicated members. In 2019, we were able to purchase a spacious, six-bedroom parsonage to replace the previous parsonage. We bought a state-of-the-art organ in 2022. We have been blessed to be able to restart our summer VBS program, through volunteers and the aid of the TVBS program. We were also able to update the kitchen appliances and the playground at church. Both church and school have grown. No doubt there are many other blessings that I have forgotten to include in all of this; such is the forgetful nature of the author, and such is the giving nature of the Lord of hosts. The Lord has provided us with many exciting blessings and opportunities to continue to spread His holy Word of truth.

But what remains ever true is our Savior's steadfast love for us. The variables change, but our constant remains the same. What Jesus won for us by His death and resurrection ever remains our focus. The Lord has blessed us, and whatever else happens in this world, He will remain faithful to us. *"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."* (Psalm 121:1-2) The Lord God has been our Help. He remains our Hope. Jesus Christ is our Redeemer. He is our eternal Home.



Benjamin Libby is pastor of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

"BREAD OF LIFE" READINGS NOVEMBER 2026

TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; LSB = Lutheran Service Book, 2006

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
November 2	LSB 540	Job 9	Job is unable to repair his relationship with the Lord. He needs a Mediator.
November 3	TLH 126 / LSB 396	Job 10	Job expresses the hopelessness of his situation.
November 4	TLH 514 / LSB 765	Job 11	Zophar denounces Job as a wicked sinner, claiming that Job deserves even worse suffering than he has received. If Job stops sinning, Zophar claims, then the Lord will bless him.
November 5	LSB 763	Job 12	Job recognizes that the Lord is in control of our lives and not we ourselves. Our well-being in life is not dependent on our personal righteousness.
November 6	TLH 521 / LSB 760	Job 13	Though we face many sorrows and tribulations in this fallen world, we find hope in our Lord Who has redeemed us.
November 7	TLH 376 / LSB 761	Job 14	When the Lord leads us through times of affliction, we find great comfort in the promise of forgiveness and eternal life.
November 9	TLH 23 / LSB 822	Psalm 116	The Lord has delivered us from death. He will deliver us out of all of our earthly troubles also. We love and praise the Lord in response to His love and deliverance.
November 10	TLH 15 / LSB 816	Psalm 117	We praise our Lord Who is faithful to His promises.
November 11	TLH 465 / LSB 912	Psalm 118	We see the steadfast love of the Lord on display throughout the history of Israel. We see the steadfast love of the Lord on display in the incarnation and earthly ministry of Christ. We see the steadfast love of the Lord on display in our own lives.
November 12	LSB 569	Job 15	Eliphaz accuses Job of arrogance and wickedness. He thinks highly of his own wisdom and admonishes Job to learn from him.
November 13	LSB 529	Job 16	The supposed friends of Job have failed miserably to comfort him. Though the Lord has afflicted Job greatly, Job looks to the Lord as his witness and advocate in the coming judgment.
November 14	TLH 651 / LSB 752	Job 17	Job bemoans his hopeless situation.
November 16	TLH 520 / LSB 754	Job 18	Bildad speaks again, declaring that the Lord punishes the wicked and by implication urging Job to repent and to live righteously in order to avoid further "punishment."
November 17	TLH 200 / LSB 461	Job 19	Job puts his hope in a Redeemer to come.
November 18	TLH 523 / LSB 756	Job 20	Zophar proclaims a false theology of glory, claiming that the wicked suffer many hardships and by implication that the righteous enjoy prosperity.
November 19	TLH 524 / LSB 734	Job 21	Job objects to the false teaching of Zophar, correctly observing that often in this world the wicked prosper.
November 20	TLH 324 / LSB 609	Job 22	Eliphaz is correct in his claim that Job, like all people, is guilty of sin. He is correct also that the Lord answers repentant prayers with forgiveness. He remains incorrect, however, in his assumption that the present suffering of Job is a specific punishment for specific sin.
November 21	TLH 552 / LSB 878	Job 23	Job appeals to the Lord.
November 23	TLH 430 / LSB 730	Job 24	Though we, like Job, may suffer in life, the Lord is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. He desires our salvation above all else and He will deliver us from our suffering in the fullness of time.
November 24	TLH 261 / LSB 655	Psalm 119:1-32	Psalm 119 consists of 22 stanzas, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Within each stanza, all eight verses (in the original Hebrew text) begin with the letter represented. Obedience to the Lord results in great blessing. The Word of the Lord is our treasure.
November 25	TLH 414 / LSB 705	Psalm 119:33-64	We desire to obey the Law of the Lord. Through the Word of the Lord we receive salvation. The Word of the Lord is our comfort. The Lord demonstrates His love for us, and we respond in faithfulness and obedience to Him.
November 26	TLH 34 / LSB 820	Psalm 119:65-96	The Lord teaches us through affliction. The Lord in His mercy comforts us. The Lord delivers us from harm and danger in His good time. The Almighty, Who has created the universe, will deliver us from all afflictions.
November 27	TLH 320 / LSB 610	Psalm 119:97-136	The Word of the Lord imparts great wisdom. The Word of the Lord guides us on the right path. By faith we receive protection from the Lord. We pursue what is right and avoid what is wrong. Our faithfulness to the Lord sets us apart from the people of this world.
November 28	TLH 5 / LSB 908	Psalm 119:137-176	We love the Law and the Gospel of the Lord. The Lord grants us salvation and we respond in thankful obedience. The Word of the Lord is our comfort amid the tribulations of this life.
November 30	TLH 371 / LSB 563	Job 25	Who, indeed, is righteous before the Lord? Repent and trust in Jesus for salvation!

Every other month we get an update on what's been happening recently at our Immanuel Lutheran High School, College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Fresh Faces at Immanuel

Thirty years ago, Heather Williams (née Bassett) arrived as a freshman in high school at Immanuel, a dorm student from South Carolina. Now, she is back in the dorm, but as the new girls' dorm supervisor.



New girls' dorm supervisor Heather Williams and family (photo credit: Rachel Naumann)

Heather attended Immanuel, and lived in the dorm, all four years. During her senior year she began dating her future husband, Eric, also an Immanuel Lutheran High School (ILHS) alumnus, who then went on to attend and graduate from the Milwaukee School of Engineering. They married in 2002, beginning a journey that would take them to a number of different places and CLC congregations around the country. These experiences have given Heather an appreciation for the fellowship we enjoy in the CLC, particularly in smaller congregations where close connections develop, and everyone appreciates every member.



New administrative assistant Bethanie Gantt and fiancée

Heather's varied experiences have prepared her well for her new role at Immanuel. She spent years as a stay-at-home mom and, most recently, she worked for three years as a paraprofessional in the Muskego-Norway School District. Furthermore, the Willams' older children, Austin and Ava, attended Immanuel as dorm students, and their daughters, Allie and Autumn, are currently high schoolers living in the dorm, so she understands the challenges that parents and students face. Becoming a dorm supervisor wasn't something that Heather had long planned, but over time, her thinking changed. She notes, "I really felt like the Lord was leading me." She now sees how the Lord used her previous experiences to prepare her for this opportunity.

Though there are some adjustments (like staying up late on weekends) that have taken some getting used to, Heather has enjoyed settling into her apartment and getting to know the girls under her care. She is also thankful for her resident assistants, Ellie Daub and Audrey Arndt.

Bethanie Gantt has also joined the staff of Immanuel Lutheran College as the administrative assistant. Bethanie attended ILHS for her junior and senior years after being homeschooled through tenth grade. Looking back on that experience, she says, "ILC was my home for two years and continues to be special to me years later."

Bethanie brings several years of work experience to her new position. Most recently, she worked as a billing claims specialist for Oakleaf Clinic, where her responsibilities included working with insurance companies to process medical bills. The computer, communication, and customer-service abilities that she developed will be particularly helpful in her new position, as well as her desire and commitment to serve ILC staff and students.

Originally from South Dakota, Bethanie now lives in the Chippewa Falls area. Away from work, she enjoys hiking and gardening during the summer and thrift shopping throughout the year. Also, she just recently became engaged to David Mach, and they plan to wed next summer.

For Bethanie, returning to ILC is more than simply taking a new job. She sees the opportunity as another way to serve her Savior: "I am excited to see how the Lord leads me to serve Him in this way."

We thank the Lord for providing these dedicated servants for vital roles on our campus, and ask Him to bless their (and all our) work here.



Dr. Daniel Schierenbeck is President of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Lutheran Spokesman

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TOP LEFT: Members of the Great Lakes Pastoral Conference tour the Dell's Mill in rural Augusta, Wisconsin, September 2026.
TOP RIGHT: Women's Retreat West - Chamberlain, South Dakota September 18-20, 2026.
BOTTOM LEFT: (l-r) Vicar Samuel Radermacher with Pastor Wayne Eichstadt in Spokane, Washington, summer 2026.
BOTTOM RIGHT: Students, teachers and alumni of Grace Lutheran School of Fridley, Minnesota on its fiftieth anniversary.



